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ABSTRACT

This document argues that the Statue of Liberty has a lot to offer teachers who need to teach citizenship to elementary students. Among the symbols within the statue that have relevance to citizenship are: (1) the tablet; (2) the chains; (3) the step from the chains; () the torch; (5) the crown; (6) the face; and (7) the new infrastructure. The keystone tablet is a symbol of active involvement and unity. Chains reflect the hold that the British government had on America. A step forward from the chains is representative of freedom and progress, while the torch is a long standing symbol of wisdom. The seven rays of the Liberty's crown stand for the seven continents, the seven seas, and the seven planets known to humanity at the time the statue was designed. Together the rays and crown symbolize earthly and universal freedom. The face of Liberty, which the statue's designer, Auguste Bartholdi, based upon the face of his own mother, is the face of transformation. An improved infrastructure, built from stainless steel instead of the original rust-prone iron, both offers and symbolizes strength. Teachers can use the symbols to bring home to children important lessons about U.S. citizenship. Contains 19 references. (SG)

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Citizenship Education Model

by

Angela Trimboli

"Piecing it Together: The Statue of Liberty as an American Education Symbol of Citizenship Education."

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Introduction

The Statue of Liberty has a lot to offer teachers who need to teach citizenship to elementary students. She's not a textbook--she's not a study in anything--she's simply a symbol of what an American education should exemplify.

Those of us who claim an American heritage need to understand Lady Liberty to truly "see" if we are what we claim to be; and if we aren't it's up to us to transform ourselves. The educational system is one path to get there.

Dalton B. Curtis Jr. says in Thirteen Questions that:

"In order for democracy to become a way of life certain conditions must be met. First, communities must be formed through effective communication, shared social ideals, and a commitment to solve common social problems. Second, local communities must communicate with and share in the common social ideals of the larger society. Third, although the particular structure of democratic government may vary, in all cases its ultimate purpose must be to create the good life by conferring equal rights and providing for human excellence. Fourth, the highest obligation of the citizen must be to engage in the practice of politics--that is, to participate in public life. Fifth, all citizens must be educated for participation in that way of living in order for the political conditions of democracy to be met."

Piecing it Together: The Statue of Liberty
as an American Education Symbol
of Citizenship Education

The Statue of Liberty overall, is considered a symbol of freedom. But the concept of freedom is very complex and takes in many aspects of human life.

The separate symbols to be examined as an education in citizenship will be:

1. The Tablet
2. The Chains
3. The Step from the Chains
4. The Torch
5. The Crown
6. The Face
7. The New Infrastructure

Before discussing the symbolism of the statue, it is essential to understand the historical significance of how the idea came to be.

After the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, there was a vast amount of sympathy for the United States of America to "stand tall for the Republic" from the people of France. Dining one evening at a party of intelligent (and wealthy) French patriots, it was suggested that Auguste Bartholdi, a sculptor, design a tribute to America from the

French. Bartholdi was looking for such an opportunity and his thoughts were already fixed on making something gigantic.

In 1871, he visited America to study the land and the people and came back to France to think deeply about his creation. Finally, he began the long process of building "Liberty Enlightening the World": which is the actual given name of the statue by Bartholdi.

Finally, in 1885, the statue was sent over in crates and reassembled on Bedloe's Island in the harbor of New York. It was dedicated to the people of America in October of 1886 by President Cleveland. All that was left now was for the American people to understand its message.

The Keystone Tablet

The left arm and hand of Lady Liberty holds a Keystone shaped tablet with the Roman Numeraled date of July 4, 1776.

Historically, the date is a symbol of America's independence. It was a time in history when Americans united together for a common concern: a better life out from the tyrannical hold of the British.

The shape of the tablet; that of a keystone; is of vital importance of the symbolism. A keystone is a central, topmost stone of an arch. It was used to hold all the other stones in place.

Today, this tablet's symbolism offers a variety of modern civic lessons for children:

-Active involvement in common concerns

-Sticking together to make a situation better for a whole group of people

-Overcoming powerlessness and excessive government control

-Having an ideal of a greater responsibility for the lives of others

-Holding together for the benefit of all concerned

As mentioned in the Rationale earlier, William Bennett's proposal for citizenship education is thought to be too abstract. In Thirteen Questions, author Dalton B. Curtis Jr.

discusses an alternate plan called education for public responsibility. It gives students (beginning in the lowest elementary levels) the opportunities to engage in solving social problems. It engages students in civic tasks throughout their school years. This "cooperative public service" is another form of sticking together for the betterment of others. But what are these social problems that today's children need to be concerned about? Let's look at the next symbol.

The Chains

Most people are unaware of this little-noticed symbol: That of the chains or shackles at Miss Liberty's foot. Historically, these chains symbolized the hold on the American people by the British. A more modern concept of chains would be anything that holds a person back from their "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness".

Examples of "chains" are endless in today's society, however here are a few worth mentioning:

-child abuse
-hunger
-poverty
-mental anguish
-social concerns
-economic concerns
-medical problems
-problems with school
-lack of love
-broken hearts
-racial prejudice
-gender prejudice
-class prejudice
-apathy
-crime
-lack of integrity
-lack of values
-diseases
-problems w/government

Unfortunately, without the proper attitude from others, the people caught in these chains are unable to go free. This "attitude" is the strength behind the tool that cuts the chain. Otherwise, we may find ourselves with the attitude towards others that Alex Rogers wrote about in 1905:

Nobody

I ain't never done nothin' to nobody;
I ain't never got nothin' from nobody;
And until I get somethin' from somebody, sometime,
I don't intend to do nothin' for nobody, no time.

The "tool" itself is the action that follows the intention of helping someone out of their chains. Without that action - the chains cannot be cut - no matter how good the intentions of others may be.

The Step From the Chains

Once people stick together (tablet) to assist other in their social problems (chains) the next course of action is for that step forward. Lady Liberty's foot is taking that step out of the chains.

Bartholdi was symbolizing the American people stepping away from the problems the British were constantly engaging them in; excessive taxation, no say in the government; lack of other freedoms; to name a few.

Today, we can suggest that Lady Liberty teaches the following ideas:

-Put you best foot forward

-Exercise your freedoms (Bill of Rights)

-You are worthy to be free (Moral worth, self-esteem, dignity)

-Look toward your future

A few examples of areas that need to "go forward" in the area of education is the school curriculum models. It is a huge task but it is necessary that it meet the needs of all students - not just many students. Students (and others) cannot take that step forward if they are only going to step off a cliff - there must be something for them to step forward onto.

That could mean that others need to work together to

support those initial steps to a place of success for that person. Only then can they learn. Only then can they turn to help the next person take their step forward.

How do we know what direction is forward? Not only do we use our "feeling" but we need to have the "sight" to see where to step.

The Torch

The torch that the statue holds high in her right hand provides the "light" to see "the way". Bartholdi meant it as a symbol of wisdom. (I remind you of the statue's true name; Liberty Enlightening the World). It was meant to show the world that America's deal of the Republic was a wise decision--an ideal the entire world should consider.

Today it is still a symbol of wisdom. But to explain what wisdom means for us today would be another infinite task. Therefore, I have selected a small variety of examples to engage the reader's mind for a moment:

> Love doesn't make the world go 'round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile.
>
> F.P. Jones

> To handle yourself, use your head. To handle others, use your heart.
>
> Unknown

> To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides.
>
> David Viscott

> It is more blessed to give than to receive.
>
> Acts 20:35

> The only reward of virtue is virtue; the only way to have a friend is to be one.
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson

> Everybody loves the tree which gives him shelter.
>
> Russian proverb

> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
>
> Colossians 3:14

Friendship is always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity.

Kahlil Gibran

He who sees a need and waits to be asked for help is as if he had refused it.

DANTE

What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?

George Eliot

Let us not love only in words or in talk, but let us put our love in action and make it real.

John 3:18

Love looks not with the eyes but with the heart.

Shakespeare

If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.

Mother Theresa

Try not to become a person of success, but rather a person of value.

Albert Einstein

The best things in life aren't things.

Unknown

There is no love where there is no will.

Ghandi

The men and women that are lifting the world upward and onward are those who encourage more than criticize.

Elizabeth Harrison

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

Wisdom is something that you can only gain if you truly desire to. Therefore, it is this desire itself that can be fostered by the teacher as a part of citizenship education.

This fostering includes the teacher using his/her faith

in the student and his/her lovingness towards the student. (Which brings up the necessary element that the teacher must truly care about the student to be able to bring them to the "threshold of their mind.")

As far as wisdom itself goes, it will differ with each person. Wisdom pertains to the relativity of that person's life experiences. (This is why the torch as a symbol of wisdom carries such a powerful message to the individual.)

The Crown

Back in the 1800's there were only seven planets discovered in our universe. This idea was incorporated into Bartholdi's symbolism of the universe.

The seven rays on the crown (or diadem) stand for the seven continents, the seven seas, and the seven planets. In other words, "Freedom" should be an earthly as well as a universal ideal.

We certainly have a long way to go to reach this goal. It lends itself to the need of world-wide civil/human rights. There are many groups that work toward this goal. It is essential to teach children acceptance and tolerance for others. But we need to teach them that when other people around the world are suffering from a lack of human rights, it is the actions of others that truly make a difference. A great source for studying these kinds of events is the International/National section of the newspaper. Examples of things that are written about that need to be transformed into better situations are any inequalities amongst people (gender, race, socio-economic).

Expression of children's thoughts by letters to congressmen and also abroad would be a good way to introduce the children to their freedom of expression. That is the first step to the action plans. Those action plans are what

makes the world a better place; which brings us to the face of Lady Liberty.

The Face

Here is a quote from the Smithsonian magazine, July 1984:

"The fact that Madame Bartholdi senior was one of the all-time great killer mother's of the 19th century did not prevent Bartholdi from venerating her--to the point, in fact, at which he borrowed her features for the face of his Liberty. It is a matter of amazement that this prototype of freedom and generosity in human affairs should have been modeled on a woman who was a byword for bigotry. Such was her hold upon her sons that Auguste hardly dared to get married (at the age of 42) to someone of whom she might not have approved. His brother Charles went out of his mind partly, it was thought, because he was afraid to tell his mother he was having an affair with a Jewish woman."

My opinion is that Bartholdi, although not intending to, made a truly remarkable symbol here--that of transformation for the better.

In all that we do, in everything we teach children--we could use this symbol to teach them that their actions should have the ideal of a transformation like the one of Liberty's face. This lends itself to the betterment of society. Examples could be as simple as helping to put a smile on someone's face or cleaning a room up to helping others in the

community to have a better situation.

In order to truly help, in order to want to make a difference, it all goes back to this: It must be meaningful. It must touch the heart. It must come from within. Let's look at the inside of the lady.

The New Infrastructure

In the June 1986 volume of the Smithsonian, there is an explanation of the efforts to renovate the deteriorating statue.

Gustave Eiffel had designed an inner armature for the statue for Bartholdi (who at the time put aside any dreams he had about an iron structure in the middle of Paris). Iron rusts however, and the engineers working on the renovation decided to replace the 1,799 iron armature bars with stainless steel replicas. Because of the stainless steel and other strength factors in modern engineering, it is said of the statue that her inner structure will make her stronger than she was when she was first built.

The lesson here is that we need to give children something to strengthen them on the inside--something that won't "rust or corrode" like the iron bars did. This leaves us three things: Hope, Faith, and Love.

Hope - to look towards a positive future.

Faith - to have in themselves that they can make a difference.

Love - that they can find reason in their hearts to want a better situation for themselves and others.

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